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ABSTRACT

Traditional efforts to reform education have not succeeded because the education system has resisted major change. Achieving meaningful reform will require educational restructuring, and this restructuring will have to be based on competition, which is a basic fact of every other profession. For this reason, many states are moving to adopt educational choice programs that introduce some genuine competition by giving parents the freedom to leave bad schools. By putting more decision-making power in the hands of parents, educational choice attempts to achieve accountability through the market. Educational choice advocates are increasingly arguing to include nongovernment options in choice plans and requiring public schools to compete with nongovernment schools. The restructuring advocated by J. E. Chubb and T. M. Moe (1986) calls for a market-based system of "scholarships" paid for by the state, to allow a student to attend any school that meets minimum criteria. School voucher programs as they are developing in several states are also an approach to restructuring that erodes the barriers between governmental and nongovernmental schools. The First Amendment issues that will arise in these cases must be explored, along with other policy questions about choice and citizenship. Market-based education can respond to these challenges, and offers the best hope for real educational improvement. (SLD)

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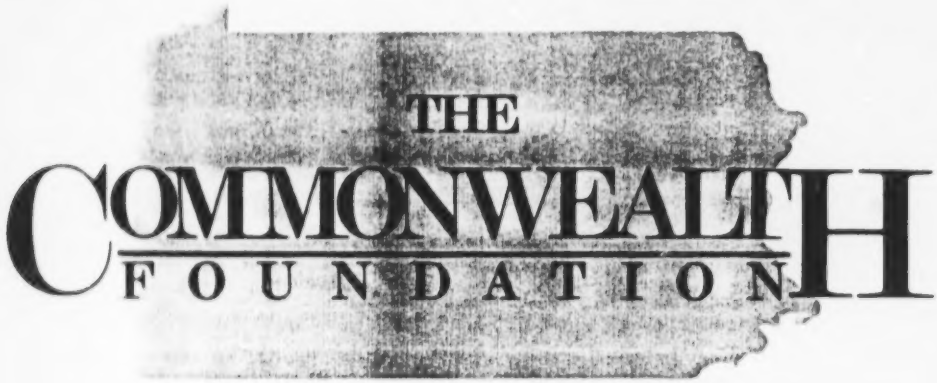

for Public Policy Alternatives

WHY CONVENTIONAL EDUCATION REFORM FAILS: THE CASE FOR MARKET-BASED RESTRUCTURING

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INTRODUCTION

There is a growing consensus in the country that most of the efforts to reform public education over the last ten years have failed. Despite years of reform measures, test scores are down, the drop-out rate is up and businesses and colleges are finding it harder to recruit literate graduates.

This report will provide a brief overview of why traditional education reform has failed and why it will continue to fail. It will review the arguments for restructuring American education based upon the need for greater accountability through competition. Finally, it will address some of the arguments against educational choice and provide answers to the most frequently asked questions about choice plans.

WHY EDUCATION REFORMS HAVE NOT WORKED

Over the past ten years, public education has been subjected to just about every conventional reform proposed by research foundations, businesses, and educational experts. Many businesses, in particular, have tried to provide "hands on" help to ailing public education by "adopting" individual schools, teaching management skills to principals, providing funds for particular programs, helping teachers develop curriculum, and more. Some individual businessmen have promised college educations to an entire grade school class in return for student promises to stay in school. A special issue of Fortune Magazine in spring 1990, entitled "Saving Our Schools," told of CEOs being principal for a day, donating classroom computers, tutoring, mentoring, and calling upon employees to volunteer. Unfortunately, there is little hard evidence that these efforts have done more than benefiting specific individuals in the limiting number of schools affected by these programs.

Moreover, most states have applied at least some of the policy reforms that were recommended by the professionals. For many states, even the most ambitious attempts at reform have produced meager results. Take Louisiana, for example. Louisiana has been a virtual laboratory of experimentation in education reform. Since 1977, the state adopted testing policies for students, teachers and principals. The schools have been forced to adopt teacher certification standards, high school graduation requirements, school board accountability, early childhood education, and curriculum guides. And the state has eliminated tenure for school principals and administrators hoping to make schools more accountable.

While these reforms received strong backing from private industry, business officials are now admitting that the reforms have not affected educational quality. Louisiana still has the highest illiteracy rate in the nation, the lowest graduation rate, and ACT test scores well below average. The state's chief business lobby, the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, attributes the failure to an entrenched and unresponsive education establishment. As stated by a recent association brochure: "... those who have tried to change the system have time and again seen reform measures watered down, ignored, not properly implemented, taken to court by the teacher unions, repealed, mired down in turf battles and power struggles between public bodies, or not funded..."[1]

BUSINESS: TOO EASILY MANIPULATED BY THE EDUCATORS

Not surprisingly, a growing number of reform advocates are becoming impatient with the education system's resistance to major change. One leading skeptic of business-sponsored

reform is Patrick J. Keleher, Vice President of the City Club of Chicago. Keleher criticizes the business community for its failure to demand and achieve the same bottom line results that are expected in the private marketplace. Keleher states: "For some strange reason, business leaders seem to be mesmerized by the titles, by the jargon, and perhaps the flagwaving that comes out of the incredibly powerful education establishment."

Keleher criticizes business for not being as critical as it should be, "by not applying its skills, performance expectations and standards where appropriate to education, by permitting education to operate as an artificial social construct without genuine market or market-like constraints (that is, as a monopoly), by not insisting on a return on its massive educational investment with payback in the form of increased academic achievement, by waiving cost/benefit justifications where education is concerned, by relying too often on education advisors hand-picked by the establishment, then accepting without challenge their carefully selected and strained statistics, by all these practices business is failing to provide the economic reality-check that education in this country so desperately needs."[2]

Keleher's assessment has received strong support from two leading education scholars, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Dr. John Chubb and Stanford University Professor Dr. Terry Moe. The problem, according to Chubb and Moe, is that the education establishment has a lot of experience in coopting and diluting meaningful change. Hence, achieving truly meaningful reform will require educational restructuring. They state: "Any reform which leaves the basic structure intact will tend to be assimilated and neutralized. In general, the various components of the existing system are so strongly interconnected that any attempt to change one component in isolation will set off a series of compensating adjustments among all the others, mitigating the impact of the reform."[3]

There are even those within the education establishment who are beginning to admit that traditional education reforms have failed and that competition is the answer. Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, admits that patience on the part of the American people is running out and that education will soon have to be put on the same competitive footing that every other profession operates on. According to Shanker: "In every other field of life, where there's competition, if you're running a lousy show, and if you don't change, you die. There is absolutely no question that American education as it exists today will not be tolerated by the American people, by our business community, by our policy leaders for more than another few years."

PARENTAL CHOICE: THE NEXT STAGE

It is for this reason that many states are moving to adopt educational choice programs that introduce at least some genuine competition by giving parents the freedom to exit bad schools. The common theme in all choice programs is the claim that competition benefits consumers of education, and in turn, the education system as well. By putting more decision making power into the hands of parents, educational choice attempts to achieve accountability directly through the market. In most cases, parents choose their child's school and the funds follow the student.

Numerous states have already adopted a diverse range of choice initiatives. Two "public schools of choice" programs that have received wide ranging attention in education policy circles are East Harlem's District 4 alternative high schools program, and Minnesota's open enrollment program.

East Harlem, District 4

Education conditions were so deplorable in East Harlem's District 4 that a handful of educators realized they had to make some drastic changes. Their solution was to create three new alternative schools that would compete with each other for students by specializing in particular subjects or teaching styles and be open to students from inside and outside the district. Each year, students select three schools in order of preference from a booklet published by the district. About 90% of the students get their first choice. The consensus among educators is that choice and competition have meant increased parental involvement, greater student interest and more respect for the teaching profession.

Minnesota's Open Enrollment Program

In Minnesota, Democratic Governor Rudy Perpich achieved passage of legislation permitting all 700,000 students to have the option of attending whatever public school system they choose as long as the receiving school has room and there is no negative effect on desegregation. The open enrollment program was brought about slowly with the adoption of pilot programs and other innovative measures such as allowing juniors and seniors to enroll full or part-time in non-sectarian post secondary institutions.

Dozens of other states have either adopted or are close to adopting some variation of the public school choice scheme. Those states include: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

EXPANDING CHOICE: THE NON-GOVERNMENT OPTION

While "public schools of choice" plans continue to gain momentum, some education scholars have come to realize that if there is merit in choice, then it should not be limited to public schools.

Increasingly, educational choice advocates are including non-government options for parents, requiring government operated schools to compete with non-government schools. Private schools routinely achieve impressive results on a fraction of the money and bureaucracy of public schools, even when their student body is comprised of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

After all, few of our economic competitors share America's preoccupation with distinctions between public and private. The emphasis is more on ends rather than means; namely, on **learning** rather than on the **institution** at which learning takes place.

According to Peter Drucker, America is the only major developed country that does not have this kind of competition. The French and Italians, for example, have two parallel systems above the elementary grades, a public and a Catholic one, both paid for by the state. Germany has the "Gymnasium," a college preparatory school, and the Japanese structure their schools according to student performance. Several East Block countries are also moving to structure their education system with few public/private distinctions. By contrast, the American system, according to Drucker, has "little competition either within the system or from the outside."[4]

THE RISE OF EDUCATION BUREAUCRACY

The lack of broad based competition has not only stifled innovation and reform, it has encouraged the development of top-down management of schools, along with heavy bureaucracy. Studies show that as much as half of all growth in educational expenditures (which was 83% above the rate of inflation since 1970) has gone into non-classroom expenses such as additional school staff and increased bureaucracy at both the state and local level.

Performance and funding comparisons between public and private schools reveal startling results. In Chicago, where the Archdiocese schools educate 177,000 pupils annually, the central office employees 39 professionals. By contrast, the public school administrative office employs 3,200 to educate only two and one half times the number of children. The cost per pupil averages $2500 in private schools compared to $9000 in public schools. These funding and bureaucracy ratios are commonplace in America's large city schools.[5]

Perhaps this explains why studies consistently show a very weak relationship between increased spending and educational improvement. Dr. Erik Hanushek, an economist from Rochester University, surveyed 152 studies that examined the impact of school funding and found there was little or no relationship between spending and performance. "The studies are startlingly consistent in finding no strong evidence that teacher-student ratios, teacher education or teacher experience have the expected positive effects on student achievement."[6]

SCHOOL AUTONOMY VERSUS CENTRAL CONTROL

Increasingly, scholarly research is producing evidence that the government, particularly centralized bureaucracy, has done a poor job of running America's schools. Perhaps the most prominent recent study was published by the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank, called **Politics, Markets and America's Schools.** The authors, Dr. John Chubb and Dr. Terry Moe, analyzed more than 20,000 students, teachers and principals from 500 schools nationwide, and concluded that "government has not solved the education problem, because government is the problem."[7]

Like many other recent studies, Chubb and Moe attempted to find out what does and does not work. They discovered that neither teacher salaries, per pupil expenditures, class size, graduation requirements, the amount of homework assigned, or any other individual school policy they examined matters. They reached three broad conclusions concerning what did work. According to the study: First, effective schools have in common certain characteristics such as clear goals, an ambitious academic program, strong educational leadership, and high levels of teacher professionalism. Secondly, the system of public education as we know it is inhibiting the development of effective school organization. This occurs because controls are imposed through democratic institutions, and these controls undermine school autonomy. Thirdly, the most important prerequisite for an effective school is school autonomy, especially from external bureaucratic influence.[8]

The authors recognize that autonomy cannot be achieved without accountability. A school can be held accountable from the top down, which has already been tried, or from the bottom up by giving parents the power to choose their child's school. Chubb and Moe propose a radical restructuring of American education in which direct control over schools is achieved as much by

markets as by politicians and interest groups. After all, the government dispenses such benefits as health care, food stamps and rent subsidies without dictating where the recipient shops.

THE BROOKINGS "SCHOLARSHIP" PLAN

To summarize the Chubb and Moe argument: the problem is autonomy, and the way to get autonomy is through competition, and the way to get competition is through parental choice. This can only be done through dramatic restructuring.

The restructuring plan put forward by Chubb and Moe calls for a market-based system of "scholarships" paid for by the state, which allows the student to attend any school that meets minimum criteria such as graduation requirements, health and safety standards, and teacher certification. Ultimately, any group or organization that meets these requirements could be eligible to form their own school.

The Brookings "scholarship" program is basically a government regulated voucher plan in which the funding follows the student to attend whatever schools he/she chooses. Among those eligible to participate under this plan would be existing private schools, including religious-affiliated schools, providing constitutional requirements are satisfied. Under the plan, each school district would maintain records of all school age children and would assist parents in making informed choices among available options.

THE MILWAUKEE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY GRANT

The nation's first school voucher plan was passed in early 1990 and is now in effect in Wisconsin's largest city, Milwaukee. The plan allows up to 1,000 low-income children to attend private, non-sectarian schools in Milwaukee. Each eligible student can receive a $2,500 voucher from the state to pay for all or part of the private school's tuition. The $2500 is then subtracted from the government school system's allotment of state funds. It does not affect funds the school collects locally. Any non-religious private school is eligible to receive a voucher, providing they meet standard health and safety requirements and do not discriminate.

The principle sponsor of the bill was Representative Annette "Polly" Williams, a Democrat and former welfare mother who chaired Jesse Jackson's Presidential campaigns in Wisconsin in 1984 and 1988. The bill was strongly supported by black parents, Milwaukee's black newspaper — the **Community Journal,** as well as white Republican legislators and the Governor of Wisconsin.

Like education reform activists in many other states, Rep. Williams has been trying to reform education for years, and has given up on conventional reforms. According to Williams: "If you go to a doctor and you stay sick, at some point don't you have a right to a second opinion? The choice plan is our second opinion. The folks who run the poverty industry in this town are worried that kids will get a better education at schools that cost half the amount they spend on the public schools. In their shoes, I'd be worried too.[9]

The Milwaukee plan is putting the idea of vouchers to a practical test, albeit on a limited basis. Since religious affiliated schools are excluded under the plan and because of the limited number

of available schools, only 391 students were able to take advantage of the program.

Even this limited experimental approach to vouchers has faced severe opposition from the outset. Shortly after the program passed, the Wisconsin Education Association, the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers and others filed a suit to block the measures, contending that it is unconstitutional because it provides state dollars to private schools. Although the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld the substance of the program, it is once again facing a Appeals Court challenge over a technicality relating to the procedure under which the bill was originally adopted.

LOUISIANA SCHOOL VOUCHERS

The Louisiana business community, long frustrated by the failure of conventional reforms to produce results, is now backing a full-fledged school voucher proposal for the entire state. The plan, spearheaded by the "Right to Learn Committee" of the state's Association of Business and Industry, would make state funded school vouchers available to low income students from kindergarten through third grade.

The Right to Learn Committee is led by LABI Vice President Jackie Ducote, who had spent 15 years trying unsuccessfully to reform the state's school system. Ms. Ducote, who has written a paper called **My Fifteen Year Journey to Nowhere,** explains her conclusions:

> I have learned that parents and citizens and even an organization as strong and powerful as the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry are powerless to make significant and lasting improvements in the public education system as it exists today. America's only hope is to change the rules of the game. We must put an external force to work that is free from the control of those who have been in charge of our failed education system in the past. And that external force is competition. The only way to get true competition is to give parents the power to choose the best school for their child — not just the best school the government has to offer.[10]

The Right to Learn Program would give a state-funded voucher worth $1,500 to students who qualify for the federal school lunch program. Eligible schools must accept the voucher as payment in full for any participating student. The program, which would be administered by the newly formed Right to Learn Commission, would be phased in over four years. The program requires that all participating students be tested by the beginning and end of each school year using a national-norm referenced test and the results be reported to the commission.

Voucher bills have also been introduced in several other states. A bill in Florida would allow economically disadvantaged children to attend an accredited private school. Legislation in Mississippi would create an educational enterprise zone, providing kids who are eligible under the school lunch program access to approved private schools. In Chicago, a bill has been introduced to require that all new state education money be allocated to a statewide voucher program.

EDUCATIONAL VOUCHERS: ARE THEY CONSTITUTIONAL?

Many agree that educational choice legislation that includes non-government schools will

benefit society. But can these laws survive regulatory and constitutional challenges? The following section examines the legal and constitutional questions that are often raised in connection with voucher plans.

The Milwaukee Plan

Since its inception, the Milwaukee voucher program has faced several regulatory and legal challenges. Soon after passage, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Herbert Grover, a strong voucher opponent, notified Milwaukee private schools that their participation in the program would be conditioned upon their meeting a long list of requirements — most having to do with educating the handicapped. Grover informed the private schools that each school must have facilities to accommodate a broad range of disabilities, even though no public school was required to do the same.

Within days of the bill's passage, a group of teacher unions and school administrators, also at Superintendent Grover's urging, filed suit contending that the voucher plan was unconstitutional because it provided state dollars to private schools without sufficient controls. Responding to this suit was a countersuit filed by a coalition of community schools, parents and State Representative Polly Williams against Grover seeking to compel him to "cease his attempts to sabotage the parental choice program." The coalition, represented by Landmark Legal Foundation Center for Civil Rights, charged that Grover exceeded his authority by trying to force private schools to meet complex and strict requirements not specified in the legislation.

According to Clint Bolick, the Director of Landmark Legal Foundation, there were two main questions raised in the suit filed by the education establishment: does the law violate Wisconsin's public purpose doctrine, and does the law violate a constitutional provision prohibiting enactment of a private bill.[11] Bolick argued that the general subject matter of the provision fulfills a public purpose and directly relates to a "state responsibility of statewide dimension," namely education, particularly in that it established an innovative pilot program in an urban area with great need. The law was upheld by the State Supreme Court.

Concerning claims that the Milwaukee bill violated federal handicapped regulations, the U.S. Department of Education, at the request of Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, prepared an analysis of the effects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) on the Milwaukee parental choice program. The Department's opinion was: "The Education of the Handicapped Act does not apply to placements in private schools resulting from parents' decisions to participate in the Milwaukee Choice Program...Section 504 does not directly apply to the private schools, assuming, as appears to be the case, that the State is using State and not Federal money to fund the placements."[12]

EDUCATIONAL CHOICE AND ISSUES OF CHURCH AND STATE

If the educational choice movement succeeds in eroding the barriers between governmental and non-governmental schools, first amendment issues of church and state will inevitably arise. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Although this issue

has not yet been tested, since no program currently includes aid to students of church-affiliated schools, such a challenge is likely to follow adoption of a full blown voucher program.

Many legal experts argue that voucher plans are not in violation of the constitution because tax dollars do not go directly to the schools, but are rather given to parents and students. Other programs offering aid to parents have been upheld in the past. The G.I. bill, for example, allowed millions of servicemen to attend the school of their choice, even religious affiliated schools such as seminaries. The federal government's student loan programs also subsidize college education for students attending religious as well as nonreligious institutions. Legal scholars also point out that many local social services are provided by church affiliated agencies which are no different than providing education services.

If it had passed the November 1990 ballot, the Oregon Educational Choice Initiative to provide an education tax credit for private education, would undoubtedly have faced a constitutional challenge. Many wonder whether it would have survived. Kathleen Beaufait, Chief Deputy Counsel for the state, was confident that it would have. Beaufait pointed to a 1971 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, which contains the standard test for determining if an Establishment Clause violation has occurred. The case reads: "First, the statute must have a secular legislative purpose; second, its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and finally, the statute must not foster an 'excessive government entanglement' with religion."[13]

The other Supreme Court decision establishing a standard on church-state matters that is frequently cited is *Mueller v. Allen*, a 1984 case that upheld a Minnesota statute which allowed a personal income tax deduction to parents for expenses incurred in sending their children to church-affiliated schools. The court found that the Minnesota law's effect was primarily secular (educating the population) and the insulating effect of letting parents make the decision prevented the conferral of the "imprimatur of state approval."[14]

Michael W. McConnell, a constitutional scholar at the University of Chicago Law School has stated in a legal brief that a plan such as Oregon's would pass constitutional muster. According to McConnell: "There can be little question that the purpose of the educational choice proposal is secular. All statements regarding the plan refer to the enhancement of parental choice, the saving of tax dollars, and the improvement of education. These are valid governmental purposes."[15]

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MARKET-BASED EDUCATION

While the idea of educational choice has become increasingly popular with parents and policy makers, implementing choice plans involves charting new territory. Educational choice schemes will undoubtedly encounter serious policy questions, as well as practical and administrative hurdles once adopted. What follows are answers to some of the more prominent questions and concerns raised about educational choice.

Won't proposals like this destroy the public school system?

Parental choice programs redefine the words "public education" in terms of the desired out-

come — producing educated students — rather than in terms of who provides the service. Making this change would make children the priority, rather than the well-being of the education establishment.

Instead of destroying government schools, competition could spur the change necessary to save them. Given the size and power of the public education establishment, schools should have little to fear in competition, particularly those which are already functioning well and satisfying parents. The only reason a public school would decline or close would be if students leave to attend a better school. If students do leave, the government schools would have more money to spend on educating fewer students.

It is possible that some government schools would go out of business if they are not good enough to attract and retain students, particularly in the inner city. But these are schools that are not functioning for the benefit of children as it is, and perhaps should be closed, or consolidated with other healthier schools. What is more likely to happen with competition is that malfunctioning schools would suddenly be forced to look for ways to improve.

Won't some students be forced to travel too far to benefit from choice?

The average size of independent schools is much smaller than government schools, so it is expected that more neighborhood schools would be created in response to newly enacted market-based programs. Most government schools already provide routine transportation for students, and many states pay for transportation of non-government school students as well.

Clearly, the transportation challenge would require planning. Under public schools of choice, the sending school district would, in all probability, be required to transport students to a transfer station at the receiving school district's border. If a choice plan is limited to public schools of choice, there is no doubt that students in low-population rural communities would face a limited range of options.

Won't some parents make bad choices?

From the experience of other states, parents who take advantage of educational choice do so because of a commitment to excellence. For the same reason, we allow parents to choose their child's doctor, what food they eat, how they are disciplined, what clothes they wear and what television they watch. Why is it assumed that parents can't make choices about what school their child attends? Surely parents — even poor, uneducated ones — will make better decisions for their children than the current method of selecting schools strictly on the basis of residence. As Rep. Polly Williams has said: "This paternalistic idea that poor people can't make choices is ridiculous. Poor people are some of the best shoppers, most skilled at stretching a dollar you'll ever see."[16]

Not only is consumer information mandated in many of these plans, education consumers will probably get information the same way they do for other goods and services they buy: from word of mouth, advertisements, news articles and TV and radio programs. Consumer groups would undoubtedly take an interest in reviewing and rating schools. In an effort to maintain enrollment, principals would also advertise a school's achievements.

Won't some schools be left with the hardest to educate?

This question assumes that the public schools are now so bad that just about everyone would leave them. This is probably not the case. Many good schools would continue to attract students, while the bad schools would face new incentives to improve.

In most large cities, the government schools are already the dumping ground for hard-to-educate, low income students. High income and middle class parents either send their children to "magnet schools," or non-government schools, or move to better public schools in the suburbs.

The fact is, government schools don't educate many of these students now. About half the students drop out, and many more are suspended or expelled. A large percentage of those who stay receive substandard education.

Most non-government schools at the elementary level don't have academic admission requirements and they have their share of hard-to-educate students. In fact, they are often the place parents send their children when discipline and academic problems develop.

If there is a demand for schools that specialize in educating at-risk students, then the market will respond with schools that want to take them. In Philadelphia, even without vouchers or tax credits, there are several non-government schools that specialize in educating delinquents, dropouts and children with learning disabilities. And they do it at half the price of the government schools.

Aren't these plans just a scheme to give tax dollars to private schools?

On the contrary, vouchers, tax credits and scholarships give parents their tax dollars to spend at schools they consider effective. If non-government schools can provide students with a good education, this is good public policy. Many other government services are provided by private enterprises at a higher quality and lower cost than what local government could provide.

Aren't these ideas impractical and won't they mean chaos in the education system?

All the plans provide for a phase-in period over a number of years. Some apply to low income students first, and all phase-in the program a few grades at a time. Anytime there are significant changes made in any part of society, during the transition, obviously some uncertainty, some disruption and some confusion will result. This is true of any human endeavor.

Won't this kind of program encourage racial segregation?

First, the ultimate goal of desegregation is a good education for minority students. The evidence is overwhelming in terms of dropout rates, test scores and college placement, that minorities are not getting a good education in most government-run school systems. Second, all responsible proposals outlined in this paper prohibit discrimination by participating schools. Vouchers, scholarships or tax credits would probably further integration by enabling minority

families to choose schools outside their district instead of being assigned to a school by the education bureaucracy.

Racial discrimination is a bigger problem in public schools than private schools — especially in big cities, as a result of white parents moving to suburban school districts.

Aren't public schools the basis of our democracy and won't ideas like this destroy it?

There is no evidence that graduates of non-government schools are bad citizens in our democracy. Do they vote less? Are they less interested in civic issues? Do they participate less in their communities? The answers to these questions is no.

If the concern is that students take basic civics classes and American history, this requirement could be included in choice legislation. The fact is, in order to work well, a democracy depends on a literate and informed population. The argument can be made that the performance of the government schools is more a threat to democracy than market-based alternatives proposed.

ENDNOTES

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